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To Wilma

Freddie

and

Louis -

In memory of a wonderful party -

C.G.W.

July - 1930

By H. H. Knibbs

THE RIDIN' KID FROM POWDER RIVER.

With colored frontispiece.

TANG OF LIFE. Illustrated in color by

E. BOYD SMITH.

RIDERS OF THE STARS.

SUNDOWN SLIM. Illustrated.

SONGS OF THE OUTLANDS. Tales of the
Hoboes and Other Verse.

OVERLAND RED. A Tale of the Moonstone
Cañon Trail. Illustrated in Color.

STEPHEN MARCH'S WAY. Illustrated.

LOST FARM CAMP. Illustrated.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK

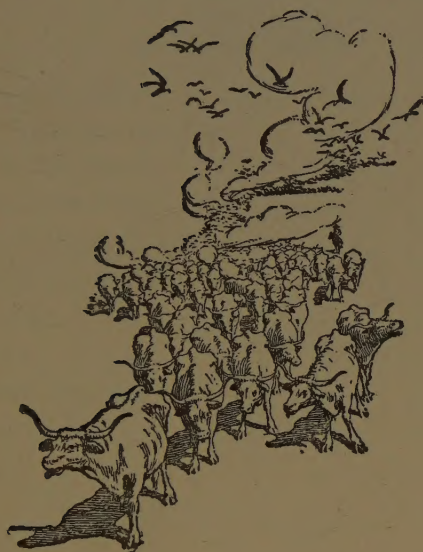
Songs of the Outlands



Songs of the Outlands

BALLADS OF THE HOBOES
AND OTHER VERSE

BY
Henry Herbert Knibbs



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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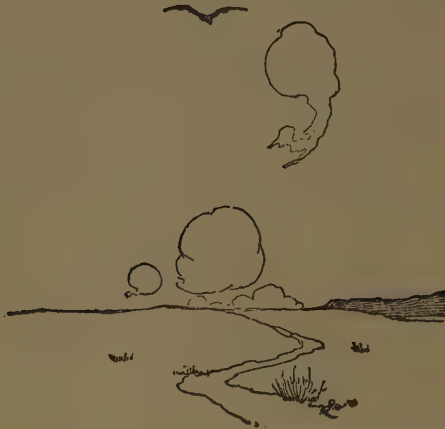
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Songs of the Outlands







THE WALKING MAN

SUNNY summer day it was when loping in to Laramie,
I overtook the Walking Man, reined up and nodded
“How!”

He'd been a rider once, I knew. He smiled, but scarce
aware of me,

He said, “If you would like me to, I'll tell my story,
now.

“They'll tell you that I'm crazy — that my wits have
gone to glory,

But you must n't be believing every Western yarn you
hear.

The one I'm going to tell you is exceptional — a story
That you've heard perhaps a dozen ways a dozen times
a year.”

Songs of the Outlands

So he whispered while the shadow of my pony walked
beside him,

“If good people go to heaven, do good horses go to hell?”
I slung one leg across the horn and sideways so, I eyed him;
“For I’ve seen the phantom ponies loping round the Big
Corral.

“And I’ve seen my pony Yuma — yes, the horse that died
to save me —

Come and nicker at the golden bars while I stood down
below

Calling, ‘Yuma! Yuma! Yuma!’ and still wondering why
He gave me

Such a friend; and why I killed her. It was twenty years
ago. . . .

“You remember; it was lonely when we used to guard the
cattle;

When a man would ride the line for days and camp at
night alone,

With nothing much to do but watch the sun rise up for
battle,

And not a soul to talk to, or what’s even worse—his own.

“So I taught my pony Yuma many tricks, for she was
human;

To rear, shake hands, to nod, or pick up anything I
dropped,

The Walking Man

Till she grew as interested and as gentle as a woman,
Just to have me praise and pet her; but one day the
teaching stopped.

“Three rustlers from the Notch rode up. I knew there
would be trouble,

But I sat my pony easy and I rolled a cigarette,
And we talked about the rodeo, when, like a bursting
bubble,

The leader opened up the fight. I felt my arm grow
wet. . . .

“It was three to one; but Yuma, like a rock, stood to the
thunder,

For she seemed to know my need. . . . Two empty sad-
dles . . . when the one

That tried at first to get me spurred up close and swung up
under,

And I saw the trail to heaven in the muzzle of his gun.

“I flinched and played the coward. ‘Up!’ I called, and at
the calling

Reared my pony; and she took his shot. I leveled quick
and twice

I answered. In the smoke I saw a twisted figure
falling;

I could feel my pony shiver. . . . Twenty years I’ve
paid the price

Songs of the Outlands

"For my life. Yes, Hell-and-Texas leave the hoofprints
in some faces;

We, the riders of the ranges, each of us has played his
part. . . .

Twenty years!" he whispered slowly. "Twenty years in
many places,

But I've never worn the print of Yuma's hoof-marks
from my heart.

"I'm the Walking Man forever. But I dream of mighty
ranges

And the silent mountain-meadows in the glory of the
stars;

And I see the phantom ponies in the dawn and sunset
changes,

And I hear my Yuma nicker, just behind the golden
bars."

Sunny summer day it was when loping in to Laramie,

I overtook the Walking Man, reined up and nodded
"How!"

He walked beside me for a while. He hardly was aware
of me,

But I think I understand him, for I know his story now.

IT WAS OVERLAND THE RED

"If you're askin' my opinion, well . . ." said Overland the Red,

As he rose to do the honors, "I might say
You are takin' lengthy chances on what's goin' to be said;
It's nothin' new — but put a different way.

"So I drink to California, the loved, the last, the best;
To her women and her horses and her men;
To old El Camino Real windin' gray and lazy to the west,
Loafin' up the range and loafin' down again.

"I drink to California, the land of light and gold;
To the poppies noddin' happy in the sun;
To the snow upon the mountains layin' bright and white
and cold;
To the old trails and the trails that's just begun.

"To the buckaroos a-ridin' out across the old Tejon;
To the mules a-jinglin' lively down the grade;
To the herder squatted smokin' by his little shack alone;
And the mockin'-birds a-dreamin' in the shade.

"To the girls that know a saddle from a pancake, on a hoss;
To the desert-rat with 'color' on the brain;

Songs of the Outlands

To the rushin' of the rivers that no man has learned to boss
When the ridges shed the roarin' winter rain.

"I drink to California, the darling of the West;
To her women and her horses and her men;
A blessin' on those livin' here and God help all the rest;
. . . In concludin' . . . we'll stand up and drink again."

THE OUTLAND TRAILS

My head grew gray on the outland trails where I stood a
man with men;
And now I whine like a hungry whelp to go out on the trails
again.

How the whip of a rifle lifts my heart to the crags of a hid-
den range,
Where the black pines circle the riven peak and the silences
estrangle
A man from himself and all humankind; where the winds
no leash have known,
And the soul is king of itself again, up there with the stars,
alone.

The sea-worn sails that idle hang in the smoke of the
harbor slips
Know a sweeter song than was ever sung by the fairest
woman's lips;
And the sea that cradles the dripping prow as it comes to
its island rest
Is a sweeter place for a weary head than the fairest woman's
breast.

Songs of the Outlands

Where the pack-train plods in the desert noon and the
world runs out to space,
And the lone coyote's hunger-cry breaks the startled
ponies' pace;
Where the visioned lake is a mockery and death holds the
pouch of gold,
There is more of peace than in all your creeds; yea, more by
a thousandfold!

Saddle and rifle, spur and rope, and the smell of sage in
the rain,
As down the cañon the pintos lope and spread to the
shadowed plain. . . .

Up on the ledge where the burro creeps, patient and sure
and slow,
Above a valley-floor that sleeps ten thousand feet be-
low. . . .

Out where the tumbling schooner fights in the spume of the
typhoon's hate;
Up where the huskie bays the lights of the Northland's
frozen gate. . . .

Sun and wind and the sound of rain! Hunger and thirst
and strife!
God! To be out on the trails again with a grip on the mane
of life!

The Outland Trails

And my woman sees and hides a tear, for the cabin door is
wide,

Unshadowed by sons that return no more, for they sleep in
the ocean-tide,

Or out on the desert sand unmarked save by the rough-
hewn stake,

For they died like men on the outland trails, but I stay for
their mother's sake;

Stay . . . and dream of the outland trails and the songs of
fighting men;

Stay . . . and whine like a hungry whelp to go out on the
trails again.

SUNSHINE OVER YUMA

SUN down the road where once the range,
Unfenced, rolled sweeping like the sea,
Now gray now green the grassy change,
Wind-swept and wavering languorously.

Sun down the road and gentle kine
Shuffling along a homeward lane,
Where once the cowboy rode the line,
Captain of herd and hill and plain.

Listen! In dim Valhalla he
Flings past the milling phantom steers,
Chanting, in ghostly revelry,
The sprightly spirit of his years:

“Come my little cayuse and lope along, lope along,
Don't you go to start a little row!
You must n't go to buckin' or to bitin' or to kickin';
Don't interrupt the angels while their little harps they're
pickin',
For we got to keep the rules or both of us will get a
lickin';
We're ridin' on the Big Range now.

Sunshine over Yuma

“But there’s not a single echo as you lope along, lope along;
Not a single friend to answer ‘How!’
There is sunshine over Yuma and the little owls are cryin’;
Red across the ‘dobes strings of chilis are a dryin’;
But we’re cinched to ride in Heaven, and that’s what we
get for dyin’;
We’re ridin’ on the Big Range now.”

With lithe-limbed ease of poise and seat,
With scarf of flame and starry spur,
Head up and proud he rides to meet
The mighty throng that sway and stir;

Knight, Archer, Troubadour and Squire,
Poet and Warrior, Prince and Peer
Forgathering, mark his strange attire,
Astounded at the song they hear:

“Come my little cayuse and lope along, lope along,
We’re headed for the Grand Pow-wow!
But down in Arizona there’s a Chola girl a-waitin’;
There’s sunshine over Yuma where the mocking-birds are
matin’;
Oh, Glory is a mighty lonely trail — this navigatin’
All around the Big Range now.

“So come my little cayuse and lope along, lope along;
Guess we got in wrong, somehow.

Songs of the Outlands

Don't exactly fancy just the way the folks are starin';
Can't exactly cotton to the funny clothes they're wearin';
Oh, it's Heaven, but it's lonely, and we've had our little
airin',

So we'll fan it back to Arizona now."

THE MULE-SKINNER

THE clack and clatter of the chain; the staggering pull to
top the crest,
The brake-line slack; below, the plain and twenty mules, in
pairs, abreast.

The heated tires that grind and smoke; the nimble leaders
swinging wide;
The swirls of powdered dust that choke, and curl along the
mountain side.

Careless of poise and keen of eye the skinner on the
wheeler's back
Condemns his mules expressively — and takes a little jerk-
line slack.

“Roll on, old wagon, we're going home! Hump, you buck-
skins, hop-it-along!
Jump, you Jerry-old-Jereboam. Listen — I'll sing you a
little song :

“Oh, I had a girl in San Antone,
She had a beau lived down that way. . . .
I met up with him one night alone. . . .
That's why I'm skinnin' mules to-day.

Songs of the Outlands

"Oh, there was a hoss in San Antone;
I borrowed that hoss and I come away,
Fanning it fast on that white-faced roan. . . .
That's why I'm skinnin' mules to-day."

The blind wheel worries in the rut; the slow sand follows
up the tire;
The distance shows a herder's hut below the ridge in sunset
fire,

As o'er the grim wheel-gutted plain, silent beneath its
weight of years,
The mules plod on with grunt and strain, with nodding
heads and swinging ears;

A cowboy turns and waves his hand. Then, with the twinkle
of his spur,
Rides slowly toward the foothill land, a lone and proud
adventurer;

But reins and listens, nods and smiles with head aslant, as
low and long
Across the hushed and stagnant miles he hears the echo of
a song:

"I ain't going back to San Antone;
Have n't time to go down that way,
For I got a girl and a kid of my own. . . .
That's why I'm skinnin' mules to-day. . . ."

The Mule-Skinner

“Skinning mules on the old Tejon,
And believe me, sister, it ain’t no play;
But I got a girl and a kid of my own,
That’s why I’m skinnin’ mules to-day.”

OUT THERE SOMEWHERE

As I was hiking past the woods, the cool and sleepy summer woods,

I saw a guy a-talking to the sunshine in the air;
Thinks I, he's going to have a fit — I'll stick around and watch a bit;

But he paid no attention, hardly knowing I was there.

He must have been a college guy, for he was talking big and high, —

The trees were standing all around as silent as a church—
A little closer I saw he was manufacturing poetry,
Just like a Mocker sitting on a pussy-willow perch.

I squatted down and rolled a smoke and listened to each word he spoke;

He never stumbled, reared or broke; he never missed a word,

And though he was a Bo like me, he'd been a gent once, I could see;

I ain't much strong on poetry, but this is what I heard:

"We'll dance a merry saraband from here to drowsy Samarcand.

Along the sea, across the land, the birds are flying South,

Out There Somewhere

And you, my sweet Penelope, out there somewhere you
wait for me,

With buds of roses in your hair and kisses on your
mouth.

“The mountains are all hid in mist; the valley is like ame-
thyst;

The poplar leaves they turn and twist; oh, silver, silver
green!

Out there somewhere along the sea a ship is waiting pa-
tiently,

While up the beach the bubbles slip with white afloat
between.

“The tide-hounds race far up the shore — the hunt is on!
The breakers roar,

(Her spars are tipped with gold and o’er her deck the
spray is flung);

The buoys that rollic in the bay, they nod the way, they
nod the way!

The hunt is up! I am the prey! The hunter’s bow is
strung!”

“Out there somewhere, —” says I to me. “By Gosh! I
guess that’s poetry!

Out there somewhere — Penelope — with kisses on her
mouth!”

Songs of the Outlands

And then, thinks I, "O college guy, your talk it gets me
in the eye,

The North *is* creeping in the air; the birds *are* flying
South."

And yet, the sun was shining down, a-blazing on the little
town,

A mile or so 'way down the track a-dancing in the
sun.

But somehow, as I waited there, there came a shiver in the
air;

"The birds are flying South," he says. "The winter
has begun."

Says I, "Then let's be on the float; you certainly have
got my goat;

You make me hungry in my throat for seeing things
that's new.

Out there somewhere we'll ride the range a-looking for the
new and strange;

My feet are tired and need a change. Come on! It's
up to you!

"There ain't no sweet Penelope somewhere that's longing
much for me,

But I can smell the blundering sea and hear the rig-
ging hum;

Out There Somewhere

And I can hear the whispering lips that fly before the out-bound ships,

And I can hear the breakers on the sand a-booming
‘Come!’”

And then that slim, poetic guy, he turned and looked me in the eye:

“... It’s overland and overland and overseas to — where?”

“Most anywhere that is n’t here,” I says. His face went kind of queer:

“The place we’re in is always *here*. The other place is *there*.”

He smiled, though, as my eye caught his. “Then what a lot of *there* there is

To go and see and go and see and go and see some more.”

He did a fancy step or two. Says he, “I think I’ll go with you —”

... Two moons, and we were baking in the straits at Singapore.

Around the world and back again; we saw it all. The mist and rain

In England and the dry old plain from Needles to Berdoo.

Songs of the Outlands

We kept a-rambling all the time. I rustled grub, he rustled
rhyme —

Blind-baggage, hoof it, ride or climb — we always put
it through.

Just for a con I'd like to know (yes, he crossed over long
ago;

And he was *right*, believe me, Bo!) if somewhere in the
South,

Down where the clouds lie on the sea, he found his sweet
Penelope,

With buds of roses in her hair and kisses on her
mouth.

OLIVER WEST

OLIVER WEST came riding down;
His face was lean and keen and brown,
And his eyes were fixed on the desert town
At the end of the Sunset Trail.

Without the ghost of a good excuse,
He set his spurs in his roan cayuse,
“Lay to it, Sarko! Cut her loose!”
And the pebbles flew like hail.

“Hi! Yip! I can hear the silver strings,
And the song that the little Bonita sings;
Say, Sarko, I wish that your feet were wings,
But you’re doin’ your best, all right!”

The sun rolled down to the western range,
And he watched the shadows shift and change,
And the little lights of the town looked strange
As they beckoned across the night.

An hour — and he clinked to the doorway glare
Of the ’dobe. The singing girl was there,
With a southern rose in her midnight hair,
And lips like a bud of June.

Songs of the Outlands

"Onda, La Onda," the song began,
As softly the silver music ran
To the heart of the swart El Capitan,
'T was the Gringo lover's tune.

The little Bonita saw and smiled,
With the pouting lips of a teasing child;
She loved — but the Gringo was not beguiled;
'T was a heart that she could not tame.

A word — and the swell of the music broke;
The room was a pit of flame and smoke,
But Oliver West not a word he spoke,
As into the night he came.

Then with more than the ghost of a good excuse,
He set his spurs in his roan cayuse;
"Lay to it, Sarko! Hell 's broke loose!"
And the pebbles flew like hail.

"Onda, La Onda's a right good song,"
Said Oliver West as he loped along;
"Was it he or she or me done wrong?"
Well, she's there — and I'm here, and we're
goin' strong,
Back over the Sunset Trail."

THE HILLS

SHALL I leave the hills, the high, far hills

That shadow the morning plain?

Shall I leave the desert sand and sage that gleams in the
winter rain?

Shall I leave the ragged bridle-trail to ride in the city
street —

To snatch a song from the printed word,

Or sit at a master's feet?

To barter the sting of the mountain wind for the choking
fog and smoke?

To barter the song of the mountain stream for the babble
of city folk?

To lose my grip on the god I know and fumble among the
creeds?

Oh rocks and pines of the high, far hills,

Hear the lisp of the valley reeds!

OVERLAND'S DELIGHT

It was underneath the stars, the little peeking stars,
That we lay and dreamed of Eden in the hills;
We were neither sad nor gay, but just wondering while we
lay,
What a mighty lot of space creation fills.

Our fire was just a spark; dot of red against the dark,
And around the fire an awful lot of night.
The purple, changing air was as quiet as a prayer,
And the moon came up and froze the mountains white.

There was nothing much to say, unless my pal there, while
he lay,
Got to thinking of his bronc-and-saddle days,
And a woman that he knew. He believes that dreams
come true,
And they do, if I'm believing what he says.

It was Overland's delight, when we quit the road at
night,
And the birds were folding up their music-bars,
Just to smoke a little bit; rub his chin a while, and sit
Like a Hobo statue, looking at the stars.

Overland's Delight

Then he'd cough to clear his throat; strike a kind of chesty
note,

Not like preachers — but just deep down near his heart;
And I think his dreaming eyes saw way up to Paradise;
Then, remembering me, he'd nod his head and start.

It was all about some woman that he loved long, long ago,
And he loved her in a kind of way I can't just under-
stand;

But if I could talk like he could, you could have my bundle,
Bo!

For he talked like this, and, pardner, it was grand:

“Her hair was like the sun that drowns the poppy fields
at noon,

And there was something in her eyes too deep and pure
to tell;

Her lips were like the red of buds that greet the dawn of
June,

Blush of roses on a sun-lit lily-bell.

“A little motion of her hand was more than words can
say;

It spoke a language all its own in pretty gesturing;
And when she smiled the flowers sang to see her smile
that way;

It made a man hold up his head and feel himself a king!

Songs of the Outlands

"I met her riding down the trail when morning-dew was
young;

Her pony's feet were castanets that clipt a happy tune.
Somehow, I took my hat off, just as if an angel sung,
As she came riding down the trail to greet the dawn of
June.

"She nodded, smiled, and rode along, brave-eyed and bright
and sweet;

I stood and watched her in the sun and saw the silver
stream
Run down across the cañon trail; and heard her pony's
feet
Like castanets, now far away, still ringing through my
dream.

"Click, clink! a passing melody that melted in the air. . . .
And in my heart a whispering like meadow-grass at
night,

When some lone wind is talking to the sleepy daisies there,
Just wavering and wondering and waiting for the light.

"Since then I've told her stories while she laughed and
clapped her hands;

Of Yuma and Sonora in the rich red days of old;
Since then I've ridden far for her delight, in haunted lands,
Where desert ledges crumble and the sand is specked
with gold.

Overland's Delight

"Have you ever loved a woman like the meadow loves the
sun,

Just contented to be living just because she's living too?
If you have, and never spoken, it's the best thing you have
done;

Then you know there is a heaven that is not beyond
the blue.

"I loved — but did not tell her. It came time for me to go
Almost anywhere, for her sake; so I drifted up along
The northern trails where winter locks the passes deep in
snow,

But I dreamed of southern ranges and a land of sun and
song,

"Where a trail runs toward the meadows; where the
poppy-fields unfold;

Where the mocking-bird is listening to the patter of a
tune

Rung by mellow cañon echoes in a melody of gold,

As she rides along the morning down to greet the dawn
of June."

Yes: 't was Overland's delight, when we quit the road at
night,

And the birds were folding up their music-bars,
Just to smoke a little bit; rub his chin a while and sit
Like a Hobo statue, looking at the stars.

Songs of the Outlands

There was nothing to be said — for the talk had drifted
dead,

And his dreams were done of bronc-and-saddle days
And the woman that he knew. He believes that dreams
come true,

And I almost think they do — from what he says.

THE PROSPECTOR

'T is the wane of the moon and the midsummer revels are
ended,

And Autumn has burnished the vale with an indolent hand;
And the breeze of the morn with the breath of adventuring
blended,

Wakes a song in my heart as I dream of a far-away land.

So I'll up with the sun while the city is torpid in slumber;
Let the wind wash the reek of the factory smoke from my
clothes;

For I've worked like a stamp in the mill leaden days with-
out number,

And I'm off to the land where the bloom of the almond-
tree blows.

To the land of the West, where the blue, where the ultimate
ranges

Sun their cloud-muffled shoulders and sit with their feet
in the sea;

Where the way of the world drifts along without too many
changes,

And a man without money has friends — if he cares to be
free.

Songs of the Outlands

With the little I'll have when I get there I'll buy me a
pony,

A pinto cayuse that knows trails and the trick of the rope,
And he'll be my singular, faithful old stand-by and crony—
When we're tired of the valley we'll cinch up and ride for
the slope.

We will camp on the crest of the foothills that run to the
mountains,

On the side where the sun disappears down the slope of the
sea;

And we'll watch as the tide shatters sky-ward in thunder-
ing fountains,

While the stars find their places and shine through the
sycamore tree.

We will follow the song of the meadow-lark out to the
grazing;

The dim mountain meadow, knee-deep with the greenest
of grass, —

Or we'll creep round the ledge where the little red wild-
flower is blazing

And drop down to Eden and trout through the Porcupine
Pass.

Call it prospecting, loafing, surveying, or simply just living,
Never think it's the lure of the gold that keeps calling
me on;

The Prospector

Merely taking the gifts mother nature to all men is giving,
Yes, even the last, the long rest, with a smile. When
I'm gone. . . .

When I'm gone? Well, the mountains are monuments
grander than glory;

And a cañon's a tomb that's as noble as any they've
made.

Let the eagle that feathers the blue tell the ocean the story,
When the pinto strays dragging a rope down the Porcu-
pine grade.

Call it prospecting? Maybe it is. And I know when it's
ended,

And I climb the Divide and report on the use of my
claim,

I won't get much credit for anything noble or splendid;

But He knows why I turned from the town to the open-
air game.

LADY-BIRD

ALL you care to do on earth is to make a show,
Sing a song of vanity, see the people stare!
And you get an audience everywhere you go. . . .
Lady-bird, whose tears are those diamonds in your hair?

Lady-bird, Lady-bird, show your silken hose;
Little children at the looms died to make your clothes.

Naked arms and beautiful — silver bloom of silk;
Feet that glide in golden shoes; lips as dear as love,
Heart as . . . Hear the striker's wife beg a pint of milk
While you dance in Babylon! Save us, God above!

Lady-bird, Lady-bird, dance the night away,
While the maimed in Mary's House are moaning for the day.

Eyes as clear as summer stars; voice that's like a song;
Hand as smooth as lily-bell, indolent and white,
Jeweled like a courtesan's fingers slim and long;
Soul as proud and desolate as the desert night.

Lady-bird, Lady-bird, draw your skirts aside;
There is where a counter-girl knew her shame and died.

Lady-Bird

Readings and theatricals, all to help the poor;

While your noble charities make a righteous fuss;

And the shawls and down-and-outs shiver at the door

Muttering and whispering, "Ten per cent for us!"

Lady-bird, Lady-bird, wear the heron's breast;

What about the fledgelings starving in the nest?

What's the use of putting on any side at all,

You, my pretty lady bird, satin, fur and lace?

You will have to answer up when we get the Call;

Won't we all be naked when we reach the Other Place?

HASH

'T WAS in one of them "Come in Stranger," joints,
That sure does lots of good,
Where they give you a bed and a bowl of soup
For sawin' a cord of wood,

That I heard that talk of the Infinite,
— They was four of us in the yard,
And our hands was raw and our stomachs flat
For that hickory wood was hard —

When the hoss-faced guy and his Infinite
Was all that we got to chew,
While waitin' the chicory, beans and pork,
And with nothin' else to do

But to listen to one fed stomach talk
About the future of our souls;
And he knew we dassent to sass him back
Or we'd lose our breakfast rolls.

And he made us feel, or tried to make
Us feel sorry that we was born,
And I happened to recollect as how
The Disciples swiped the corn.

Hash

As they needed it along the way,
Being hungry like all folks get,
And I got kind of sore on the hoss-faced guy,
For his sayin's, they did n't set

All too good on my empty stomach then,
And I reckon I got too rash,
And I says, "Nix, Bo, on the Infinite,
What we're needin' most is *hash*!"

It come damn hard to give up our grub,
But Toledo Blake and I
We beat it then while the others stayed
And ate with that hoss-faced guy.

We braced a gent on the down-town side,
And told him our story straight;
He did n't yip for a Dick, but grinned
And I liked his style first-rate.

"I own a string of saloons," he says,
"From here to the blooming Bay,
I don't stand in with the Gentrytown,
But I've got this much to say,

"There was never a hungry man on earth
Been kep' waitin' on my talk yet,
And as sure as my name is Tim," says he,
"You want hash — and it's hash you'll get."

Songs of the Outlands

It was coffee and ham and potatoes fried
And eggs and some real French rolls.
Thinks I, how were hungry guys to know
That God ever gave 'em souls?

Did you ever bump into Tim Sullivan
With the vest like a yella splash?
Well, he don't go much on the Infinite
But say, he knows hash is hash!

GENTRYTOWN

IN vain the city voices call;
The outlands claim us evermore.
Youth and Romance and Love and all
Have passed, with all we dreamed before.
The hounds of Truth along the way
Had with our pace their paces set;
And yet it was but yesterday
We lost the girl we can't forget.

Yes, it was only yesterday
We danced with her in Gentrytown.
She mocked the budding bloom of May
With silken ankle, flowered gown;
And we — we played that endless game
And Fortune's every challenge met.
We lost; but still we love the name
Of her, the girl we can't forget.

Oh, Gentrytown! Adorable
To him who knows no man's commands;
The paradise of wealth, the hell
Of all who labor with their hands.
We labor not —that in your face!
Nor stride where Moloch spreads his net.

Songs of the Outlands

But no! We'll bless the dwelling place
Of her, the girl we can't forget.

What trails remain unknown to us
O'er desert, timberland or sea?
What sin has not been shown to us?
What greed, what hate, what misery?
As drunk with wine of wandering
We sang a merry canzonet,
As even now we rise to sing
Of her, the girl we can't forget.

What visions at the wayside fire
As the slow smoke disturbs the air!
What pallid shapes of wan desire
Gnaw at our hearts the while we stare
Across the flame at Gentrytown. . . .
With foolish tears our cheeks are wet;
Tears? Nay! But jewels on the gown
Of her, the girl we can't forget.

To win is fame — to lose, disgrace.
We lost. There is no more to tell.
Ah, girl, in furbelow and lace,
We lost for you, yet love you well.
Exiles are we of Gentrytown;
Outlawed we plod the trails, and yet
Until the lone, last moon goes down,
There lives one girl we can't forget.

ALONG THE SHORE

THE waves come walkin' up the sand;
 "Weep! Weep!" and "Hush!" along the shore,
Frettin' and teasin' at the land,
 And rollin' up the smooth brown floor,
Frettin' and sayin' things galore.

One night in June I left the ties
 And made a fire to boil some tea
Down on the beach; a paradise,
 With nothin' 'round to bother me
Except the talkin' of the sea.

The stars were blinkin' big and still;
 The drift-wood fire was snappin' bright;
The moon, back of me on the hill,
 Was flirtin' with the summer night,
Just a-pertendin' to make light.

I had the makings and I smoked
 And wondered over different things,
Thinkin' as how this old world joked
 In callin' only some men kings
While I sat there a-blowin' rings.

Songs of the Outlands

Me? I was king of anywhere,
Peggin' away at nothing, hard.
Havin' no pet, partic'lar care;
Havin' no trouble, or no pard;
"Just me," filled up my callin' card.

The waves come walkin' up the sand;
"Weep! Weep!" and "Hush!" along the shore;
Fumin' and frettin' at the land,
And rollin' something up the floor;
Frettin' and sayin' things galore.

Something — The moon was growin' bright
And cold and high and big and round —
Something that floated limp and white;
Something I wish'd I had n't found,
A woman in the moonlight, drowned!

And then I saw that she was young;
Was pretty-dressed and not long dead.
Her hair was black and thick and hung
Just like a cloth wound round her head.
"Weep! weep!" and "Hush!" the ocean said.

No storm had lately been that June;
There was no sign of wreck or boat,
But shinin' in the rising moon
I saw a locket on her throat,
And in the locket was a note.

Along the Shore

The note I read close to the flame;
— The fire with some fresh wood I fed —
Just one word, and below, a name;
— Close to the fire a dancin' red —
One word, "Good-bye" the locket said.

I thought I knew her story then,
For she was pretty-like and sweet;
"Good-bye" I stooped and read again;
I crossed her hands and made her neat;
Then shakin' I got on my feet.

I might 'a' left her there for such
As come and stare to see next day;
But thinks I, I can do this much;
I'll hide her from what folks will say,
Guessin' at why she went away.

I buried her there in the sand.
"Good-bye" I said for her once more.
I left the locket in her hand;
The waves were saying things galore;
"Weep! Weep!" and "Hush!" along the shore.

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

I DON'T mind working to earn my bread,
And I'd just as soon keep straight;
I've listened to what the preacher said
About rams and sheep at the gate;
I like to sleep in an easy bed,
But I tell you this, old mate:

A man like me, what you call a Bo,
Can blister and sweat and save
All his life, and earn just enough of dough
To prove that he *is* a slave,
And have, when it comes his time to go,
Well, enough to line his grave.

Say, mate, have you ever seen the mills
Where the kids at the looms spit blood?
Have you been in the mines when the fire-damp blew?
Have you shipped as a hand with a freighter's crew
Or worked in a levee flood?

Have you rotted wet in a grading-camp,
Or scorched on a desert line?

The Sheep and the Goats

Or done your night stunt with your lamp,
Watching the timbers drip with damp
And hearing the oil-rig whine?

Have you seen the grinders fade and die,
As the steel-dust cut them down?
Have you heard the tunnel-driller's cry,
When the shale caved in? Have you stood by
When his wife came up from town?

Have you had your pay held back for tools
That you never saw or could use?
Have you gone like a fool with the other fools
To the boss's saloon, where the strong-arm rules,
And cashed your time for booze?

Well, those are the games — I've played 'em all —
That a man like me can play.
And this lovely world is a hard old ball;
And so at the last I took a fall
To the right and proper way;

And that is to see all the sights you can
Without the admission price.
That's why I've changed to a traveling man,
With a quilt and a rope and a kind of plan
Of hitting no one place twice.

Songs of the Outlands

I do no kicking at God or Fate;
I keep my shoes for the road;
The long gray road — and I love it, mate;
Hay-foot, straw-foot, that's my gait!
And I carry no other man's load.

For I'm free! Oh, the lowlands by the sea
To the mountains clear across
On the other side, they belong to me;
A man owns nothing unless he's free,
And I am my own good boss.

I don't mind working to earn my bread,
And I'd just as soon keep straight,
But according to what the preacher said,
I'm a ram — and I've missed the gate;
But I'm jogging ahead, and jogging ahead,
And perhaps I'll find it, mate.

BALLADE OF THE BOES

WE are the true nobility!

Sons of rest and the outdoor air!

Knights of the tie and the rail are we,

Lightly meandering everywhere.

Having no gold we buy no care,

As over the crust of the world we go,

Stepping in time to this ditty rare:

Take up your bundle and beat it, Bo!

Camped on the sand of the sleepy sea;

— Having a little time to spare —

We dream for a day's eternity

Of the years unravel'd that brought us there;

Or out on the blazing desert bare

We gasp in the shade of a box-car row,

While our interior trumpets blare,

Take up your bundle and beat it, Bo!

Food we have without toil or fee,

Nor take we heed when the tourists stare;

For every man on his grave stands he,

And each man's grave is his own affair.

Monarch, pauper, or millionaire,

Father and son shall come to know

Songs of the Outlands

That the ultimate hour will this burden bear:
Take up your bundle and beat it, Bo!

Prince, our vulgarity, you declare,
Shocks your soul and disgusts you so;
Your pardon, Sire, but accept your share;
Take up your bundle and beat it, Bo!

THE GRAND OLD PRIVILEGE

FOLKS say we got no morals — that they all fell in the
soup;

And no conscience — so the would-be goodies say.

And perhaps our good intentions did just up and flew the
coop,

While we stood around and watched 'em fade away.

But there's one thing that we're lovin' more than money,
grub, or booze,

Or even decent folks what speaks us fair,

And that's the grand old privilege to chuck our luck and
choose

Any road at any time for anywhere.

NOTHING TO DO BUT GO

I'm the ramblin' son with the nervous feet
That never was made for a steady beat.
I had many a job — for a little while;
I been on the bum and I've lived in style,
But there was the road windin' mile after mile —
And nothing to do but go.

So it's beat it, Bo, while your feet are mates;
Take a look at the whole United States.
Oh the fire and a pal and a smoke at night,
And up again in the mornin' bright,
With nothing but road and sky in sight!
And nothing to do but go.

Then beat it, Bo, while the walkin' 's good;
While the birds on the wires are sawin' wood;
If to-day ain't the finest for you and me,
There 's always to-morrow what's goin' to be,
And the day after that is a-comin' — see!
And nothing to do but go.

So beat it, Bo, while you're young and strong;
See all you can, for it won't last long.

Nothing to Do but Go

You can stop for only a little spell

On the long gray road to Fare-ye-well,
That leads to Heaven or mebbly Hell —

And nothing to do but go.

BREAD

Oh, my heart it is just achin'
For a little bite of bacon,
A hunk of bread, a little mug of brew;
I'm tired of seein' scenery,
Just lead me to a beanery
Where there's something more than
only air to chew.

ON THE RANGE

MY pony was standin' thinkin' deep;
Can hosses think? Well, I reckon so!
And I was squattin', half asleep,
When into the firelight stepped a Bo.

He grinned in a kind of friendly way;
He ate some grub and he rolled a smoke.
I sort of listened for him to say
What was comin' — and this is how he spoke:

“Oh, the world is good and her towns are good,
And so are her folks, if understood.
Hay-foot, straw-foot, left and right,
Over the next hill, out of sight,
Rambling everywhere, day and night,
And plenty of things to see;

“For the world is good and her folks are good,
And all of 'em like to be understood,
From the rich man ridin' his limousine
To the guy that is hit by the big machine,
And the thousand or so that are in between,
Clear down to a Bo, like me.

Songs of the Outlands

“All you have to do is to cast your eye
On the sun or the stars, without askin’ why,
Or the moon there, rollin’ above the line;
She don’t crowd the stars but she lets ’em shine:
And pal, don’t you think they are doin’ fine,
All helpin’ to make the show?”

“And we all got passes to go and see
All there is — and all there is goin’ to be.
Hay-foot and straw-foot, left and right,
And I’m usin’ my pass both day and night,
And she’s good for the whole show. Get me right?
And I’m nothin’ except a Bo;

“Yes, the coarsest siftin’ of the lot.
Now imagine the chance that best has got.
Sure there ain’t no medals stuck on my vest,
But I would n’t change with the gilt-edged best,
And when it comes time to lie down and rest,
Well I guess it will come right good;

“But somehow, or somehow to *me*, it seems
That that pass is good where they make the dreams.
Say, maybe we’ll see it all over again,
The wind and the sun and the snow and rain,
And old friends and places, and see ’em plain,
And *all* of ’em understood.”

On the Range

I was punchin' then for the old Tejon.

I reckon I won't forget that night,

Or the Bo and me by the fire alone,

With nothin' but sand and sage in sight.

THE PATRIOT

WHEN the Mausers are a-popping from some hazy bunch
of brush,

And our Gatlings hustle up and start to sneeze;

When the Colonel says, "It's too dam' slow! We'll try
'em with a rush!"

Then who sings about "the flag that braved the breeze"?
Not a Johnnie in the reg'ment says a word about the
flag,

Or sings verses with a patriotic tone;

A fella 's either layin' hot and wilted to a rag,

Or he's runnin', skirmish order, all alone.

Who ever heard a fella sing "My Country 't is of Thee,"

When the sun was makin' fritters of the air?

There ain't no time to think about the noble, brave and
free,

When he 's pickin' Mauser bullets from his hair.

He is workin' ('t is his business) and he's drawin' crumby
pay

For his belly-ache and overtime and drink,

But when you put him on the job, he's there and there to
stay,

If the fever does n't put him on the blink.

The Patriot

John Brady was my bunkie, and he knew a thunderin'
pile

Of them sentimental songs what ladies sing

In theaters down near Mott Street, where a guy can get a
smile

Or the punk cigar the bleary waiters bring;

Where the Prof. what thumps the keyboard takes a drink
with every vet.,

(And when the boys are buyin' there's a few)

And he winks at some pink dollie what lays down her
cigarette,

Waddles on the stage and sings, "The Boys in Blue."

I have seen John Brady cryin' in a rummy music-hall

'Count of liquor and them songs; some is that way;

And I've seen that same old Johnny pin a Spaniard to a
wall

Slick and easy like a fella pitchin' hay,

While the Spaniard did the cryin', but old Johnny only
grinned,

Or cussed because the yella Dago's hand

Scraped a few potato peelin's off his beak and left it
skinned;

And what Johnny said was not, "My Native Land."

The song that Johnny favored when we hiked it down the
road

Would n't suit a deacon's meetin' very well,

Songs of the Outlands

But it kept us all a-joggin' down the pike while Johnny
crowed,

"An' when we ketch 'em won't we give 'em hell!"

... One day a Mauser bullet potted Johnny slick and
clean,

He doubled up. I helped to bring him in.

He did n't send no "Dyin' love," but lit up his dudeen

And says, "Jimmy, send my pay to Maggie Flynn."

He never thought of glory and he never said a word

Like you hear some fellas spoutin' in a rhyme;

He just lay ca'm and cheerful, and the last thing that I
heard

Was, "I guess, old pal, I'm through with doin' time."

God knows I got no license to be writin' down this stuff,

But a fella must say something. Hully Gee!

He'd'a'done the job lots better than I can — that's sure
enough,

If he was settin' here, instead of me.

MY HEART'S DESIRE

MY heart's desire is nothing great:
Say just a little eight-by-eight
Log cabin in the Northern woods
Where I can wallow in my moods
And wade around in solitudes
And rubber boots;
Free from excitement, noise and dudes . . .
Yes, that just suits!

My heart's desire is nothing much:
A little venison, and such
Sweet trout as markets ne'er afford;
A little time to praise the Lord
My own peculiar way, for these
Simplicities that ever please
And never pall
The mind, as in the birchen trees
The thrushes call.

My heart's desire is nothing large:
The open sky, the river-marge;
The soundless woods, the empty shore;
Pine-needles on the parlor floor,

Songs of the Outlands

And hazy lazy hours of life
Just breathing air ;
— One could n't ask much less — No strife,
Peace everywhere.

My heart's desire? The waterfalls;
The rushes where the grackle calls;
The joy of negative delights;
The melody of summer nights;
My wife's mild word
Of practical suggestion — Say,
“You have n't washed your face to-day”
But faintly heard.

My heart's desire? Well, come to think,
It's all too near Elysium's brink
For humankind.
One's heart, you know, is apt to change;
Most anywhere one can arrange
His peace of mind.

WOODLAND BIRD

DIM in the forest enchantment where a hidden bird rejoices,

There I dreamed of her face, fairer than love is fair;
And her voice was a song to me, sweetest of earthly voices;
A word she spake to my heart, and it lingers forever
there.

And as the bird is glad for the golden sun adorning
The woven arch of shade shot with a thousand gleams,
So am I glad in song for the memory of that morning
Filled with a dreamland melody sung by my girl of
dreams.

There did I touch her hand with my lips in my homage to
her,

Speaking no faintest word, whispering naught, and lo!
The wind it sang for me a faëry song to woo her,
And her eyes grew deep with a mystery that only the
dreamers know.

O, little wind in the branches you may cast your arms
around her,

Caressing her golden hair; kissing her lips and eyes;

Songs of the Outlands

You may speak to the silent lake, whispering that you
found her

Fairer than love is fair as you play in the morning skies.

Some day, in the leafy aisles, this madrigal may greet her,

But patient my heart must wait, speaking no faintest
word,

Until the long long night shall call me at least to meet her

And follow forever the forest ways and the song of my
woodland bird.

NANNETTE

OVER a height-of-land the trail
Wanders down to an inland sea
Where never a keel nor a mirrored sail
Has ruffled its broad tranquillity,
Save a golden shadow that fires the blue
As I drift across in my birch canoe.

On the long gray sweep of the windless shore,
The stately buck and the slender doe
Pick their steps down the sandy floor,
To the mouth of an indolent stream below,
And stand, thigh deep in the silver tide,
While the dawn-swept mists up the mountain glide.

High on the flank of a towering steep,
Brave in the sun my cabin stands,
And the sunbeams creep and the shadows creep
Aslant through the green of the timberlands;
On a log the gray of the lichen shines
In the somber dusk of the giant pines.

Often I hear in the morning hush,
Thin and far through the cedar-gloom,

Songs of the Outlands

The song of the wistful hermit-thrush,
Like a faëry harp on the shore of Doom.
And the ghostly white of the birch tree seems
As a spirit lost in the vale of dreams.

When evening's star-hung curtain falls
O'er hill and hollow, o'er stream and lake,
A wild loon calls — and another calls,
And the distant island echoes shake,
And sweet is the low wave's monotone,
As it floats the mosses on log and stone.

At night, when the silvered poplar leaves
Palpitate in the summer moon;
When the little owl in the alder grieves,
And the fox is hid in the fern of June;
I wait on the trail to my hidden sea
For Nannette, my belle, to come to me.

CARCASSONNE

(From the French)

OF years three-score; yea, I am old,
And naught but toil has filled my days,
Wherein my one desire, oft told,
Unsatisfied, still finds delays,
Till it would seem that here on earth
Perfect good fortune is not won;
My vow has never come to birth,
For I have not seen Carcassonne.

One sees the distant village high
Among the mountain-peaks of blue;
And would I journey there, then I
Five leagues must pass to come unto
Its gates — and five leagues home again.
Ah, would the vintage, once begun,
Turn grapes to gold! But that is vain,
And I shall not see Carcassonne.

I hear one may see there (each day
A holiday from morn to night)
The citizens in fine array
Of newest coats and kirtles white;

Songs of the Outlands

And one may there great castles view
As grand as those of Babylon!
And Generals — a Bishop, too!
Perhaps. I know not Carcassonne.

Oh, ay, the Priest has spoken truth
A hundred-fold indeed, for when
He prayed did he not say, forsooth,
“Ambition wrecks the souls of men”?
Yet could I find ere life be spent,
Two days when harvest-toil is done,
Ah, God! But I should die content,
Could I but then see Carcassonne.

O God, forgive, forgive I pray,
If this my prayer offendeth Thee!
Old age puts not all dreams away,
E'en though such dreams from childhood be.
My wife and boy Aignan have been
As far from home as to Narbonne.
My god-son, Perpignan has seen,
But I have not seen Carcassonne.

Thus sang a peasant of Limoux,
Bowed by the weight of many a day.
I said to him, “Friend, we will go
At last, and journey down that way.”

Carcassonne

Next morn found us upon the road,
But ere one-half our travel done
Eased was the peasant of life's load;
He never saw fair Carcassonne.

ROMANY MAID

O FOR the old days
On Lombardy highways,
Trailing past hedge-hidden gardens of June,
Where like a nightingale's plaint in the by-ways
Love charmed the light of the midsummer moon!

There in the still night,
Lutes of the starlight,
Touched by the fingers of Silence, to sound,
Drew magic cadence in silver-green far light
Down from the stars to our Romany ground.

O, for the old days
On Lombardy highways!
Noon, and the voice of its indolent tide;
Night, and the patter of rain on the by-ways;
Dawn, and my Romany girl at my side!

Love, how the old lays,
Sung on the highways,
Falter, like desolate birds overflown;
Gone is the charm of the midsummer by-ways;
Silent the song — since I journey alone.

VOYAGEURS

“FLAMBEAU, Lestang, DuBois, LaRue;
Little man, big man, riverman all;
— Oh, the long bateau and the light canoe!
Swing her over and drop her through!”
Hear the canoe-man call!

Flambeau and Lestang in the quick canoe,
Lunge through a rollicking waterfall.
In the long bateau, DuBois, LaRue
Stand. “By Gar! And vee mek’ eet too!”
Hear the bateau-man call!

“Salut!” And a dip of the flying craft
That shakes herself in the snoring rips.
DuBois he frowned. LaRue he laughed;
“Sacré! She go laik’ wan lumbaire-raft!”
As the bateau swings and dips.

Flambeau, Lestang, DuBois, LaRue,
Little men, big men, lean and strong.
— Oh, the slow bateau and the swift canoe! —
Quick at the pole and the paddle, too,
Sing as they drift along.

Songs of the Outlands

“Ma belle Nannette!” sings Beau Flambeau,
While the eager paddles of dripping ash,
And the steady oars of the long bateau,
Keep time with the song as the boatmen row,
And the trout in mid-stream flash.

A woodland village swings into view.
A rasp of keels on the rocky beach;
The long bateau and the light canoe
Glisten, upturned in the evening dew,
Away from the river's reach.

DuBois, Lestang, LaRue, Flambeau,
Rivermen short and rivermen tall,
Each with a chattering wife in tow,
Into the light of their cabins go —
Merci! And that is all.

FOR THE WIND IS NEVER HUSHING

O MOTHER, little mother, 't is a weary way before me!
And my heart is ever aching all the night, and oh, the
dawn
Brings the wind that bends the willow, brings the dread of
waking o'er me,
And the wind that bends the willow whispers, "Gone!
Gone! Gone!"

O mother, little mother, came that desolation o'er ye,
Like the black chill of the barren in the grip of winter
dawn,
When the love ye dreamed forever went the endless way
before ye?
Did ye crouch among the shadows keening, "Gone!
Gone! Gone!"

O mother, little mother, ye have trod the way before me;
Still ye croon and ye are smiling as ye peer across the
dawn.
But I shall never smile again, O mother dear that bore me,
For the wind is never hushing of its "Gone! Gone!
Gone!"

WHERE THE PONIES COME TO DRINK

UP in Northern Arizona there's a Ranger-trail that passes
Through a mesa, like a faëry lake with pines upon its brink,
And across the trail a stream runs all but hidden in the
 grasses,
Till it finds an emerald hollow where the ponies come to
 drink.

Out they fling across the mesa, wind-blown manes and fore-
 locks dancing,
—Blacks and sorrels, bays and pintos, wild as eagles, eyes
 agleam;
From their hoofs the silver flashes, burning beads and
 arrows glancing
Through the bunch-grass and the gramma, as they cross the
 little stream.

Down they swing as if pretending, in their orderly dis-
 order,
That they stopped to hold a pow-wow, just to rally for the
 charge
That will take them, close to sunset, twenty miles across
 the border;
Then the leader sniffs and drinks with fore feet planted on
 the marge.

Where the Ponies Come to Drink

One by one each head is lowered, till some yearling nips
another,

And the playful interruption starts an eddy in the band:
Snorting, squealing, plunging, wheeling, round they circle
in a smother

Of the muddy spray, nor pause until they find the firmer
land.

My old cow-horse, he runs with 'em: turned him loose for
good last season;

Eighteen years' hard work, his record, and he's earned his
little rest;

And he's taking it by playing, acting proud, and with good
reason;

Though he's starched a little forward, he can fan it with
the best.

Once I called him — almost caught him, when he heard my
spur-chains jingle;

Then he eyed me some reproachful, as if making up his
mind:

Seemed to say, "Well, if I have to — but you know I'm
living single . . ."

So I laughed. In just a minute he was pretty hard to find.

Some folks would n't understand it, — writing lines about
a pony, —

For a cow-horse is a cow-horse, — nothing else, most people
think, —

Songs of the Outlands

But for eighteen years your pardner, wise and faithful,
such a crony

Seems worth watching for, a spell, down where the ponies
come to drink.

THE END

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